

# THE GULL



GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER VOL. 88 NO. 4 APRIL 2003

FOUNDED 1917

## Dramatic Turnaround for the Alameda National Wildlife Refuge

by Arthur Feinstein

**H**

ope blooms anew for the Alameda National Wildlife Refuge and for the endangered California Least Tern, Brown Pelican and the 100 other species that nest and roost at the Refuge.

In the February 2003 *Gull* (available on our Web site at [www.goldengateaudubon.org](http://www.goldengateaudubon.org)), we reported a potential new threat to the Refuge. New legislation allowed the Navy to transfer the Alameda National Wildlife Refuge to a private entity rather than to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. By coincidence, Leora Feeney, GGAS Board Member and Chair of our Friends of the Alameda Wildlife Refuge (FAWR) Committee, and I were going to Washington D.C. to attend a Friends of National Wildlife Refuges conference just as this new worry became evident. What a successful visit it was!

Leora and I spent nearly a week visiting the offices of Representatives Barbara Lee, Pete Stark, Nancy Pelosi and Ellen Tauscher, and Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer. All were strongly supportive of the Refuge. We also had long meetings with Assistant Secretary of the Interior Judge Craig Manson and Assistant Secretary of the Navy Wayne Army which left us with renewed optimism.

Assistant Secretary of the Navy Army made it clear to us that the Navy is no longer seriously considering giving the Refuge lands to a nonprofit. Evidently the Navy was not sure that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service truly wanted an Alameda National Wildlife Refuge and was looking for alternative owners. We assured them that local Fish and Wildlife Service staff were ardent in their support for this

refuge. We left with a firm belief that a transfer of the land to the Fish and Wildlife Service was indeed going to happen, perhaps even this year.

Our next meeting was with Assistant Secretary of the Interior Judge Craig Manson. We were overjoyed to learn from him that our expectations were correct. He is wonderfully enthusiastic about and committed to the refuge. The first thing he said when we entered his office was that he had been getting a lot of letters on the Alameda issue. Thanks to all of you who wrote! It is clear that Judge Manson cares deeply about

wildlife and recognizes the great importance of having urban refuges. He assured us that he would make it clear to the Navy that the Service wants the refuge. Leora suggested that it would be wonderful to establish the refuge this year, the Centennial Year of the National Wildlife Refuge system,

*continued on page 12*



*Immature Brown Pelicans. The Brown Pelican is just one of many species that nest and roost at the refuge.*

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



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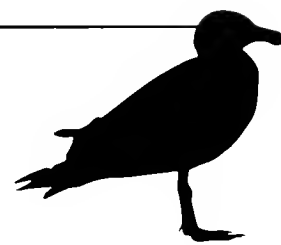
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# FIELD TRIPS

Susan Groves



## Birding for Families at Strybing Arboretum

San Francisco

Saturday, April 5, May 3

9-11 a.m. Meet at the front gate of the Arboretum (9th Ave. and Lincoln Way) for this regular first Saturday of the month bird and nature hike through the exciting micro-habitats of Strybing Arboretum. Arrive 15 minutes early to see exhibits—beaks, bones, feathers, nests. For ages 7 and older. Please bring binoculars, small notebook and pencil. Leaders: San Francisco Nature Education Leaders Naney DeStefanis, Angie Geiger, Scott Walker and Strybing Arboretum Docent Darin Dawson. Sponsored by GGAS, Strybing Arboretum and San Francisco Nature Education 415.876.5220; eherons@yahoo.com; myblueherons@yahoo.com.

## Tennessee Cove, Golden Gate National Recreation Area Marin County

Sunday, April 6 

Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the trailhead. From San Francisco take Hwy. 101 north to Marin County and exit on Hwy. 1 toward Mill Valley and Stinson Beach. After about 1/4 mile, turn left onto Tennessee Valley Road and continue to the end of the road. This approximately 3-mile round trip walk will take us through lush riparian habitat. We hope to see nesting hawks and other breeding birds, including Common Yellowthroat, Wilson's and possibly MacGillivray's Warbler. Lunch optional for this half-day trip. Beginners welcome. Leader: Bob Hogan 415.258.0811.

## Strybing Arboretum

San Francisco

Sundays, April 6, May 4

Meet at 8 a.m. at the front gate of the Arboretum (9th Ave. and Lincoln Way) for this regular first Sunday of the month half-day trip. Strybing Arboretum is a delightful section of Golden Gate Park, with several "micro-habitats" attracting a varied array of resident, migrant and vagrant birds. Beginners and all others welcome. GGAS co-leaders: Allan Ridley, Rick Ferriek; Strybing Arboretum Docents: Helen McKenna, Linda Lyons. 415.566.3241.

## Aquatic Park

San Francisco

Sunday, April 6

Meet at 9:30 a.m. at the foot of the Hyde Street Pier (Hyde & Jefferson) for this beginners bird walk. Discover birds next door to the urban environment. San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park Ranger Carol Kiser will lead this approximately 2-hour walk. Dress in layers. Trip is wheelchair accessible. 415.561.7100 or 561.7104.



For carpool coordination, call Susan Groves at 510.654.5954 if you can share a ride or if you need a ride.

[\$] trips go to parks or other sites which require an entrance fee.

If you need information and have difficulty reaching a field trip leader, if you have suggestions for trips, or if **you are interested in leading a trip**, call Susan Groves, Field Trips Committee Chair.

## Tilden Regional Park

**Sunday, April 13**

Meet at 9 a.m. at the Nature Center parking lot for this half-day trip. Enter the park from either Canyon Drive (where Spruce meets Wildcat Canyon Rd.) or Shasta Rd., off Grizzly Peak Blvd. in Berkeley and follow the signs to the Nature Center at the north end of the park. We will bird Jewel Lake and other areas, looking for Orange-crowned Warblers, House Wrens, Black-headed Grosbeaks and migrating hummingbirds. Beginners welcome. Heavy rain cancels. Leader: Lewis Cooper 510.526.1773; lbcpr@earthlink.net.

## Arrowhead Marsh

Alameda County

**Sunday, April 13** 🚗

Meet at 9:30 a.m. at the fishing pier at the end of the road. Take I-880 south to Hegenberger exit. Turn right at the stop light onto Hegenberger, then right at the first stop light onto Edgewater. Drive past Pardee Lane, over the bridge and take an immediate left into the parking lot. We will meet at the pedestrian bridge over the Elmhurst Slough and stroll past Arrowhead Marsh and around Mitigation Marsh. Bring a scope if you have one. Beginners welcome. Heavy rain cancels. Leader: Bruce Mast 510.435.1371; (Please don't call after 9 p.m.); email bmast@alumni.rice.edu.

## Mines Road

Livermore area

**Saturday, April 19** 🚗

Meet at 8 a.m. in the parking lot of the Nob Hill Shopping Center (the shopping center is still there; Nob Hill grocery is out of business). Take I-580

east and turn right on No. Livermore Exit. Continue south two miles to the shopping center at So. Livermore and Pacific in Livermore. From there, we will caravan on mountain roads to I-5. We can expect to see Bullock's Oriole, Lewis' Woodpecker, Lawrence's Goldfinch and Phainopeplas. Bring food



*Bob Lewis leads a trip to Las Gallinas*

and liquids. Those who want are invited to continue with the group until dark. Because of very limited parking along roads, carpooling is strongly recommended. Leader: George Bing 925.443.5868.

## San Bruno Mountain

San Mateo County

**Saturday, April 19**

Meet at 9 a.m. at the headquarters parking lot on Guadalupe Canyon Parkway on this half-day trip, which is a joint activity with the Friends of San Bruno Mountain. We expect to see birds migrating through as well as returning breeding birds such as Bullock's Orioles, Western Tanager, flycatchers and Wrentits. Winter Wren is particularly abundant on San Bruno Mountain. Leaders: Herb Brandt 415.239.2711 and Doug Allshouse. [\$] to park in parking lot if gate is open.

## Novato Hotspots

**Saturday, April 26** 🚗

Meet at 8 a.m. at the entrance gate to Mt. Burdell Open Space Preserve on San Andreas Drive 1/2 mile north of San Marin Drive. We'll hike about three hilly miles listening and looking for songbirds, woodpeckers and raptors. Expect Grasshopper Sparrow, Cassin's Vireo, Chipping Sparrow, Western Kingbird, Lark Sparrow, House Wren, Golden Eagle, and Blue-grey Gnatcatcher in this oak woodland and savanna habitat. After a picnic lunch at nearby Miwok Park, we'll head over to Rush Creek to look for vagrant shorebirds such as Solitary, Semipalmated, Baird's, Pectoral, or Stilt Sandpiper, all of which have been found there in April. We'll walk

another 2-3 level miles there. Trip will end about 3 p.m. Leader: Ken Burton 415.669.1847.

## Point Reyes National Seashore Sixteenth Annual All-Day Birding Blitz

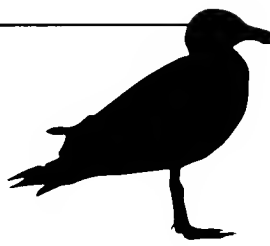
**Saturday, April 26** 🚗

Meet at 8 a.m. at the Five Brooks Trailhead parking lot, approximately 3.5 miles south of Olema on the west side of Hwy. 1, for this joint GGAS and National Park Service program. We will bird the Five Brooks Pond area, Limantour Spit, Drakes Beach, Fish Docks and Point Reyes, ending at Bear Valley for a multi-habitat trip that usually tallies over 100 species. Fast-paced but non-competitive. Bring water, food and layered clothing. Leaders: Leon Abrams 510.843.4107, leonabrams@earthlink.net; and Cathy Purchis Catpur@value.net.

*continued on page 5*

# PROGRAMS

Anne McTavish



We meet socially at 7 p.m. Programs begin at 7:30 p.m. For more information about upcoming events or detailed directions to either program location, please check out our Web site at [www.goldengateaudubon.org](http://www.goldengateaudubon.org). As always, the programs are free and open to the public.

## San Francisco

The San Francisco meetings are held at the County Fair building at the Strybing Arboretum in Golden Gate Park, 9th Avenue at Lincoln Way. Parking is available on the street or in the parking lot behind the building off Lincoln at 10<sup>th</sup> Ave.

### Friday, April 11

Alvaro Jaramillo:

#### "Birds of Cuba"

Most Americans have never been to Cuba, so few American birders have been able to experience the superb avifauna of this island nation. Cuba fortunately maintains some large areas of forests and marshes and, unlike in other Caribbean nations, it is relatively well protected. The availability of good habitat such as the famed Zapata Swamp, which is more forest than swamp, is the crown jewel for the birder. We will see the swamp and various other spots in the West and central part of Cuba.

Of the Caribbean Islands, Cuba has the largest number of endemic bird species. Though Cuba is an island its geographic placement has created a crossroads of sorts, with the avifauna having components from the north, the south and the Caribbean itself. The latter are epitomized by the wonderful Cuban Tody, a tiny, colorful bird that looks like a mix between a hummingbird and a kingfisher; it is related to the latter. The Great Lizard-

Cuckoo is as impressive as its name sounds. The Cuban Bee Hummingbird is considered the smallest bird in the world, while the Zapata Rail may rank amongst the most elusive. From familiar to the greatly unfamiliar, Cuban birds are surprisingly diverse. Come join me for an exploration of Cuba, from a birder's perspective.

*Alvaro (Al) Jaramillo is a tour guide for Field Guides and leads trips throughout the Americas. He also holds a post as biologist at the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory. Al has just finished writing a field guide to the birds of Chile.*

## Berkeley

The Berkeley meetings are held at the Northbrae Community Church, 941 The Alameda, Berkeley (between Solano and Marin).


### Thursday, April 17

Daniel Edelstein:

#### "The Miracle of Migration:

#### The Amazing Nomadic Lives of Birds & Other Animals"

Why do birds and other animals migrate? Which birds migrate at night and which by day? Did you know some species travel 700 miles per day during migration? Explorations of these phenomena and many others highlight this colorful slide show that features photographs, sounds and range maps. Current techniques relating to the "why's" and "how's" of migration study will be featured.

*Daniel Edelstein is a wildlife ecologist with Wetlands Research Associates ([www.wra-ca.com](http://www.wra-ca.com)). He has led bird walks and taught natural history classes since 1981. Daniel is also a bird-bander and performs breeding bird surveys. His Web site at <http://home.earthlink.net/%7Eedelstein> features information relating to his presentations.* 

## Special Event

Bob Stewart:

### "Common Insects and their Relatives"

#### Thursday, April 10

Randall Museum  
199 Museum Way  
San Francisco

We will begin promptly at 7 p.m. so we can give our guest speaker as much time as possible for both his slide presentation and your questions.

There are an overwhelming 28,000 species of insects in California alone. Many are very common species seen every day by birders and botanists. Bob will use close-up photographs to identify species, which will be organized into groups according to their role in the world (plant eaters, nectar/pollen feeders, predators and scavengers). Awareness of insects and spiders make food-chain connections between plants and birds more evident and will enhance your observational powers.

Bob recalls Red-breasted Sapsuckers eating cottony scale insects on willows in the Sierra; Black-capped Chickadees foraging on willow lichens in Arcata, and a fall vagrant Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher that spent a week near Bolinas Lagoon eating black-and-yellow garden spiders. Watching insects in southeast Arizona (many of which occur in the deserts of California) stimulated Bob's concentration on watching the small.

*Bob has been a teaching naturalist for 40 years, and is the author of two butterfly books. He promises colorful stories about creatures that can be found in your own backyard!*

This special event is co-sponsored by the San Francisco Natural History Series (SFNHS) of the Randall Museum and GGAS.

## End of Grant Avenue


San Leandro

Sunday, April 27 

We will meet at 9 a.m. for a half-day trip. We hope to see shorebirds. From Berkeley, take 880 south. In San Leandro you will arrive at a point where the 238 Fwy going towards 580 begins. Stay in the rightmost lane and leave the 880 as if heading towards 238. Take the Washington Ave. exit, which appears almost immediately on the right. At the base of the offramp, you will be on Beatrice. Turn left on Beatrice then right on Washington. Continue on Washington, past Lewelling, to Grant Ave. Turn right on Grant and take it to the end. There is a small East Bay Regional Park parking lot next to a restaur-


ant called Mei Ling's. Leader: Rusty Scallf 510.666.9936; rscallf@jps.net.


## Second GGAS Ohlone Wilderness Backpack Trip

May 2 – 5 

This is a very strenuous 20-mile hike over four days and three campsites. See February 2003 *Gull* for details. Leader: Kathy Jarrett 510.547.1233; kathy\_jarrett@yahoo.com.[\$]

## Yosemite's Bird Life

June 13 – 15 

The lower and middle elevations of Yosemite National Park are alive with singing birds in early June. We will bird each day and look for owls in the evening. See March 2003 *Gull* for details. Leaders: Dave Quady 510.704.9353 and Bob Lewis.[\$] 

## Great Blue Heron Events

### See the Great Blue Herons and Their Chicks at Stow Lake!

Every Saturday in April and May  
10 a.m. until 1 p.m.

Great blue herons have been nesting and raising their chicks in Golden Gate Park since 1993 when Nancy DeStefanis, Director, San Francisco Nature Education, discovered the first documented nest in San Francisco. Since then, 53 chicks have learned to fly at the Stow Lake colony. Discover the blue herons for yourself.

Meet at Stow Lake Boathouse each Saturday from April 5 through May 31 and follow the signs to the Heron Explainers Project where Academy of Sciences interns and DeStefanis will be stationed with spotting scopes and offer spectacular views into the herons' nests, answer questions about these amazing birds' habits and behaviors, and lead 11 a.m. nature walks to see the other nesting birds each Saturday.

Sponsored by the California Academy of Sciences and GGAS.

### Tenth Anniversary Celebration Lectures

San Francisco Main Library,  
Koret Auditorium

Saturday, April 12 at 2 p.m.

Nancy DeStefanis will show slides of this year's colony and the short movie *Heron Island* by Emmy award winning filmmaker Judy Irving. Come early to see the exhibits.

San Francisco Natural History  
Series, Josephine D. Randall  
Museum Theatre,

199 Museum Way (off Roosevelt)

Thursday, April 24 at 7 p.m.

Completely new slide show of this year's nesting herons! Join Nancy and friends for the accordion rendition of "My Blue Herons" as well as cake and special prizes.

For further information about these events, contact Nancy DeStefanis at 415.876.5220; nancyd@sfnature.org.

## GGAS Plans Work and Play Around Earth Day

GGAS will celebrate Earth Day 2003 on Saturday, April 19, with clean-up projects on both sides of San Francisco Bay. Come join us for fun, fresh air and healthy activity! The actual Earth Day this year is designated for Tuesday, April 22.

### East Bay


Clinton Basin (off of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue and The Embarcadero on the Oakland Estuary) at 9 a.m.

We will pick up trash and debris in the newly restored tidal wetland, joining with representatives from the Port of Oakland, Fifth Avenue Neighborhood Association, and Baykeeper, all of which participated in this highly successful restoration project (see March 2003 *Gull*).

A ceremony celebrating completion of the project will take place at 11 a.m., followed by a luncheon, hosted by the Port of Oakland, for all volunteers at 11:45 a.m. on the lawn in front of the Port Building at Jack London Square.

### San Francisco

9 a.m. – 12 p.m. (with a break for refreshments)

We will continue work on quail habitat restoration in the Presidio (see March 2003 *Gull*). With the Presidio Trust's approval of the Presidio Quail Recovery Plan, we are restoring "Quail Commons" and also starting to create quail habitat in other Presidio sites. To find out where to meet, contact Alan Hopkins at 415.664.0983 or ash@sfo.com. 



# Introduction to Breeding Land Birds of the East Bay



GAS is offering a four-week course to introduce beginning birders to some of our common East Bay breeding land birds. The class will emphasize field identification, building birding skills, and the pure joy of watching birds. We will also touch upon natural history and conservation of East Bay birds, birding optics if there is interest, reference materials and ethics. The class is limited to 15 students to allow for optimum personal attention.

Classroom instruction will be on Wednesday evenings, 7:30–8:30 p.m. at the GGAS office, 2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite G, Berkeley, with morning field trips the following Saturdays at various East Bay locations, including Tilden Regional Park and Mount Diablo State Park.

Classroom instruction will start on Wednesday, May 7; the first field trip will be on Saturday, May 10. The following classes and field trips will run consecutively over the next three weeks (May 14 and 17, May 21 and 24, May 28 and 31) for a total of four classes and four field trips.

The classroom instructor will be GGAS member Lillian Fujii. Field trips will be co-led by Lillian and Steve Hayashi, who have spent much of their last five spring and summer weekends volunteering on the Contra Costa Breeding Bird Atlas Project.

To register, send your check for \$50 made payable to Golden Gate Audubon Society to the GGAS office

at the address below. Include your phone numbers and email. There are no refunds. Recommended text is *Birds of North America* by Kenn Kaufman, available at the GGAS office at a 20 percent discount.

To enroll by VISA or MasterCard, call the GGAS office at 510.843.2222

during our business hours of Tuesday to Friday, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Golden Gate Audubon Society  
2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite G  
Berkeley, CA 94702

Questions? Call Lillian Fujii at 510.236.4167. 

## Farallon Islands and Tufted Puffins

Sunday, August 10, 2003


GGAS and Shearwater Journeys are offering a trip to view the Farallon Islands on Sunday, August 10. The special GGAS members price is \$90 non-refundable. (Due to fluctuating fuel prices, a \$5–10/person fuel surcharge may be necessary on the day of the trip). We will depart from Sausalito aboard the Salty Lady for an eight-hour adventure to the Farallon Islands and beyond.

The Farallon Islands are home to nearly 200,000 nesting seabirds. We will look over the colonies of Common Murre, Pigeon Guillemot and Brandt's Cormorant, and watch for Tufted Puffin. On most Bay Area pelagic trips the Tufted Puffins can be difficult to find, but on the Farallones the birds are visiting their nesting areas and are almost guaranteed. While we are cruising around the islands we will also have an opportunity to see Elephant Seals, Stellar and California Sea Lions, and Harbor Seals.

After viewing the islands, weather permitting, we will head west to the edge of the continental shelf to search for deep-water seabirds. On previous Farallon trips we have spotted Black-footed Albatross, Northern Fulmar, Pink-footed Shearwater, Buller's Shearwater, Ashy Storm-Petrel, Sabine's Gull, and Rhinoceros Auklets. We've also seen Humpback and Blue Whales, Dall's Porpoises, and Common and Northern Right-Whale Dolphins.

To register, send a check for \$90 to Shearwater Journeys, noting that you are a GGAS member. Include a phone number and e-mail address (if available) for each member of your party and a self-addressed stamped envelope to:

Shearwater Journeys, P.O. Box 190, Hollister, CA 95024

For more information please call Alan Hopkins only at 415.664.0983. 

# New Membership Chair Joins GGAS Board

**A**utumn Garrett has joined the GGAS Board of Directors as Membership Chair, following unanimous approval by the Board on February 24, 2003.

Originally from southern California, Autumn earned her bachelor's degree in ecology from University of California, San Diego. She moved to the Bay Area six years ago and earned a master's degree in conservation biology at San Francisco State University. Her career interest is focused on habitat conservation and management, working for either a nonprofit organization or government agency. Last year she spent nine months traveling alone through Southeast Asia, where she would like to return one day to work on conservation.



Autumn Garrett in Thailand

"Although my experience has been in plant, community and fire ecology, I've always been a bird enthusiast," Autumn notes. "I'm interested in working with GGAS because of its excellent conservation achievements. Plus, I like the challenge of being membership chair. I hope to help increase GGAS' budget by increasing membership so that the chapter's conservation and education work can continue and grow."

Autumn already has plans for a membership drive and is seeking volunteers to help her, by staffing a GGAS table at Crissy Field (see below) and at other locations, making announcements about GGAS at public events and classes, and pursuing other opportunities.

Please welcome Autumn and give her a hand! 🐦

## Membership Chair Recruits for Recruits

Want to get some fresh air, meet lots of people and help spread the word about GGAS and the pleasures of birding? Join our new Membership Chair, Autumn Garrett, as she organizes a membership sign-up table for a half-day on weekends in Crissy Field in San Francisco. Autumn is just getting started on this project and, in addition to volunteers, she is seeking a scope to attract passers-by. You can come for a half-hour, an hour or more and help make people aware of the wonderful world of birds, as well as GGAS conservation activities, field trips, and of course, membership opportunities. No special birding skills are required.

For more information and to sign up, e-mail [autumn\\_garrett@hotmail.com](mailto:autumn_garrett@hotmail.com).

## Donations

Thank you for your generous donations to support our many conservation, education and membership activities.

### Golden Eagle (\$1000 and more)

John H. Austin & Jacqui Smalley  
(+\$25,000 with matching \$25,000 donation from Coventry Health Care, Inc. for new Conservation Director Position)

Mr. & Mrs. Totton Heffelfinger  
(New Conservation Director Position)

Park East Tours  
(\$10,700 donation for GGAS-sponsored East Africa Birding Trip)

### Peregrine Falcon (\$500 to \$1000)

Anonymous (FAWR & Chapter), Harold Kirker, Kathleen J. Purcell (Stow Lake Education Project/SF Nature Education)

### Least Tern (\$200 to \$500)

Eleanor Briccetti

### Clapper Rail (\$100 to \$200)

Peter & Pinky Kushner (Dog/park issues), Arnold Levine (Dog/park issues), Elise G. White

### Gifts (to \$100)

Don A. Denison, Lillian Fujii & Steve Hayashi\* (Latin America Committee), Shirley Gordon\*, Jayne Haldane\*, Lisa Hayes, Daniel R. Jacobs\*, Eugenie Marek (Dog/park issues), Bruce Mast, Charlotte Nolan\*, Vivian Pon, Roland Quillet\*, Phila Rogers\*, Maggie Seely\*, Miriam Sponberg\*, Kathleen E. Sullivan\*, Mrs. Juliette Wheeler\*

### In Memoriam

John Henry Mitchell: Carolyn Kolka  
Aileen Pierson: Catherine S. Lyon

### In-Kind Donations

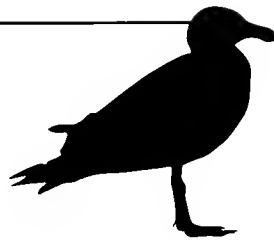
Helen Green: Office volunteer supplies

\* With GGAS Supporting Membership

A bequest to the Golden Gate Audubon Society helps make it possible for us to continue the good work we do in helping preserve our natural world for future generations. If you are interested in setting up a bequest, we have a team of experts who will be glad to help you. Please call Arthur Feinstein at our GGAS office for more information. Our phone number is 510.843.2222. Thanks.

# BACKYARD BIRDER

Meg Pauletich



**F**riends began calling me when a negative article appeared in our local paper about feeding birds. It had been reprinted from the *Wall Street Journal*. The author cited the Laboratory of Ornithology at Cornell University. However, the director of the laboratory responded with some outrage in a letter to the editor, saying the author had cited him out of context and failed to include other crucial points about the positive aspects of feeding birds. In the end, the article left the mistaken impression that bird feeding is a bad practice.

The most important contribution of bird feeding is the enlistment of backyard birders to study daily, seasonal and year-to-year fluctuations (the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health have major research projects). And in these troubled times, bird watching in one's own yard is a wonderful connection to nature and gives us a sense of peace.

Limited studies have been done to assess whether backyard feeders are creating a population of dependent wintering birds. At the University of Wisconsin, researchers compared winter flocks of Black-capped Chickadees in two similar woodlands, one equipped with feeders stocked with sunflower seeds. After three years they found that winter survival rates were highest in the woods with feeders but only during winters with prolonged periods of extreme cold. This suggests that in milder climates, feeders may have little effect on the winter survival of chickadees.

This led the researchers to wonder if birds may lose their natural talent for finding food and become too dependent on hand-outs. So, they removed the feeders from a woodland where birds had been fed for 25 years and compared the survival rate with a group of chickadees who had not been fed. The feeder-dependent birds immediately began foraging for food and



American Robin, McLaren Park

survived the winter as well as the other "wild" group. This was not surprising since food from feeders had made up only 21 percent of the birds' daily energy requirements in the previous two years. This suggests that feeders do not promote dependency in birds.

Now that I've made the case for feeding your neighborhood birds, keep in mind that poorly maintained feeders can spread the following diseases:


- *Salmonella*, the most common, is spread by food contaminated by infected droppings.
- *Aspergillosis*, a fungus which grows

on damp feed and in the debris beneath feeders, causes bronchitis and pneumonia.

- *Avian pox* is a viral infection which causes wartlike growths on a bird's face, legs and feet. It is spread by mosquitoes but also by contact with infected surfaces.
- *Trichomoniasis* spreads through contaminated food or water.
- *Mycoplasmosis*, the eye infection which have spread in East Coast populations of House Finches, is transmitted by direct contact or airborne droplets or dust.

Here are some tips on how to minimize the spread of these diseases:

- *Avoid crowding.* Providing ample feeder space.
- *Clean up wastes.* Keep feeder areas clean of waste food and droppings.
- *Make feeders safe.* Use feeders without sharp points or edges. Even small scratches allow bacteria and viruses to infect otherwise healthy birds.
- *Clean and disinfect feeders regularly.* If you have extra feeders, rotate them so you have time to air-dry feeders. Thoroughly clean the feeder, then soak for at least three minutes in a solution of one part liquid bleach with nine parts water. If you notice sick birds, don't feed for a week or so.
- *Use good food.* Don't use musty-smelling, wet or moldy food. Disinfect the food container and scoop if food goes bad.
- *Prevent contamination.* Keep rats and mice out of food as they can spread diseases to birds.
- *Spread the word.* Encourage your neighbors who feed birds to follow the same precautions.

Now, go enjoy feeding and watching "your" birds without guilt! 



# Spring Bird Seed Sale

Friday and Saturday, May 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>

Here's your chance to pick up quality Volkman seed at the GGAS Office outside normal office hours.

Just fill out the seed and feeder order form at right and mail it to the GGAS office with your check or credit card information **by Thursday, May 1st**. Please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope so your order confirmation can be mailed to you. If it is easier, call the office, 510.843.2222, with your order and credit card information.

In filling out your order, please take advantage of the **10 percent GGAS Supporting Member discount**. If you aren't yet a GGAS Supporting Member, you can sign up by entering the \$20 dues in the "Sign me up as a GGAS Supporting Member" line near the bottom of the order form.

Most of our native birds favor either sunflower seeds (chickadees, nuthatches, woodpeckers, White-crowned sparrow, purple and house finches) or niger seed (goldfinches, pine siskins and chickadees). If you have a question about which kind of seed to buy, call the GGAS office.

While you are at the office, check out the standard field guides, bird song cassettes and CDs, plus new books such as those listed below (prices include tax):

- New 4<sup>th</sup> edition of *National Geographic Field Guide to North American Birds* (\$23.75)
- *Sibley's Birding Basics* (\$17.25)
- *Peterson's Field Guide to Western Birds' Nests* (\$21.75)
- *Stokes Beginner's Guide to Bats* (\$9.75)

We will have plenty of extra seed on hand during the sale, so come to the office even if you do not place an order.

*This sale is for GGAS and National Audubon members only.*

## Birding Field Class

Tuesdays, April 29 – June 3, 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

In these six classes you will observe and learn about the field identification, life styles, and ecology of local birds. Each Tuesday morning the class will visit a different birding spot. Offered through the Fremont Adult School, the class is designed for both beginning and experienced birders. Be prepared to bird watch at the first class meeting. Class size is limited. Register by Thursday, March 24. For more information call Fremont Adult School at 510.791.5841 or Alice Hoch at 510.657.0475.

*Alice Hoch has been teaching bird-watching for the adult school since 1975. She has been a birder for 42 years.*

## GGAS FALL BIRD SEED ORDER FORM

Order and Prepay by Thursday, May 1<sup>st</sup>

Pick-Up Friday, May 9<sup>th</sup> (3 to 6 p.m.) or

Saturday, May 10<sup>th</sup> (9 a.m. to noon) at the GGAS Office

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (Day) \_\_\_\_\_ (Evening) \_\_\_\_\_

SEED		PRICE	QTY	AMOUNT
GGAS Own Mix	20#	\$ 9.50		
Contains red and white millet and black oil sunflower seed	50#	\$ 22.75		
Volkman Premium	20#	\$ 9.50		
Contains only red and white millet	50#	\$ 22.75		
Black Oil Sunflower Seed	25#	\$ 11.00		
	50#	\$ 19.25		
Black Oil Sunflower Chips	25#	\$ 24.00		
No hulls, no mess				
Niger (Thistle) Seed	5#	\$ 7.25		
	20#	\$ 27.25		
Suet Cake (Hi-Energy, 11.75 oz.)		\$ 2.00		
Suet Cake (Peanut, 11.75 oz.)		\$ 2.50		

FEEDERS				
Duncraft Seed Tube Feeder 16"		\$ 27.00		
Squirrel-Proof Tube Feeder		\$ 59.50		
New Sunflower Seed Feeder Squirrel Blocker		\$ 32.50		
Thistle Stocking		\$ 3.25		
New Duralite Tube Thistle Feeder		\$ 29.25		
Hummingbird (window)		\$ 10.75		
Hummingbird (16 oz. bottle)		\$ 13.00		
Hummingbird (saucer style, 16 oz.)		\$ 18.00		
Suet Cage Squirrel Proof		\$ 21.50		

SUB-TOTAL (Tax incl. in price)

Less GGAS Supporting Member 10% Discount  
(applies to new GGAS Members—sign up on line below)

TOTAL less 10% Discount

Sign me up as a GGAS Supporting Member—Dues (\$20)

Donation to GGAS

TOTAL PAYMENT

Mail with payment and self-addressed, stamped envelope to:  
GGAS, 2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite G, Berkeley, CA 94702

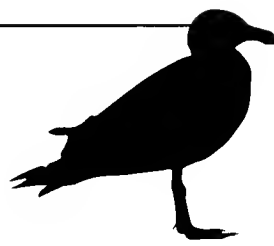
Check enclosed \_\_\_\_\_ Visa \_\_\_\_\_ MasterCard \_\_\_\_\_

Credit Card No. \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# OBSERVATIONS

February 1–28, 2003  
Bruce Mast



tiple times in Feb. (JM; mob).

The month saw the usual winter smattering of uncommon geese and ducks. Eurasian Wigeons were reported on three occasions in MRN (GF; DMr; JR) and once in NAP (MB). "Common" (Eurasian Green-winged) Teal showed up on 6 Feb. in Redwood Shores, SM, (RT; AW) and 9 Feb. at Hayward Regional Shoreline (ALA) (BRc).

Tufted Ducks made an appearance at Bolinas Lagoon, MRN, on 4 Feb. (JR); at Vallejo's Lake Chabot, SOL, on 9 Feb. (CL & LL; mob); along Las Amigas Road, NAP, on 15 Feb. (DnH & DvH; mob); at Lake Merritt, ALA, on the same day (JM; mob); and on 26 Feb. at Bodega Harbor, SON (TM). On 24 Feb., a possible hybrid male Tufted Duck/Greater Scaup was seen in the Petaluma River (SON). The bird was described as having a small tuft and white flanks, with a bill and head resembling a Greater Scaup (RL).

Observers found 4 Harlequin Ducks during the reporting period: on 7 Feb. at Coyote Point Marina, SM (RT); a pair on the 8<sup>th</sup> at Sea Ranch, SON (LS); and a single bird on the 15<sup>th</sup> near Bolinas, MRN, (PG).

A male Long-tailed Duck was espied at Martinez Shoreline, CC, on 2 Feb. (DWi). Braving the rain on 12 Feb., a birder next found a Long-tailed (presumably the same bird) across the Carquinez Strait near Benicia, SOL, where it was seen repeatedly throughout the month (JL; mob). On 9 Feb., a male and two females were seen cruising near the Fort Baker yacht harbor, SF (KS & KK) and on 16 Feb., the same species was observed from Pigeon Point, SM (RT).

Barrow's Goldeneye rounds out the February duck report with regular sightings at Lake Merritt and Peralta Park, ALA, (RTh & SK; mob) and on 6 Feb. at Coyote Point Marina, SM (RT).

## Raptors to Alcids

Raptor reports included the expected Bald Eagles, Ferruginous Hawks, Rough-legged Hawks, Golden Eagles, Merlins,

**F**or those of us with thin blood, February offered hope that spring was just around the corner. Our back yard oak tree started putting out leaves. Cherry trees and other early bloomers began perfuming the neighborhood. Various quarters reported bird nesting activity for Blackbirds and Bush-tits, Herons and Harriers, and other sonorous species. Still, winter visitors, especially ducks, geese and shorebirds, dominated the hotlines and email lists in February.

Those who cared to venture further afield in search of rarities had several interesting birds to pursue in Northern California. Notable rarities included **Trumpeter Swan** (*Cygnus buccinator*) (MOD), **Zone-tailed Hawk** (*Buteo albonotatus*) (MTY), Laughing Gull (MEN), Vermilion Flycatcher (MER), the continuing **Nutting's Flycatcher** (*Myiarchus nuttingi*) (SCZ), Northern Shrike (LAS & MOD), and Harris Sparrows (GLN & PLA).

The Nutting's generated particular interest due to its camera-friendly congeniality and the identification challenges it presented. Don Roberson has posted a thorough ID analysis at <http://montereybay.com/creagrus/nuttingfly-id.html>. The site documents multiple diagnostic field marks, comparing each to field marks for Ash-throated Flycatcher. At the risk of ruining the suspense, he concludes the bird is indeed a Nutting's. But readers should review the thought process for themselves—it's quite instructive.

But on to the hotline reports.

## Loons to Ducks

Red-necked Grebes made a strong show-

ing in February, especially in SF, where one was seen near Crissy Lagoon on the 2<sup>nd</sup> (DA) and the 16<sup>th</sup> (HC), at the Yacht Club on the 14<sup>th</sup> (RP) and 15<sup>th</sup> (BF), and near the Ferry Building on the 18<sup>th</sup> (DA). On 23 Feb., 2 were seen at Seal Rock, SON (RL).

Given the challenges of land-based sea watching, any tubenose sighting could be considered noteworthy, but three reports in particular stand out. On 16 Feb., a Pink-footed Shearwater was observed from Pigeon Point, SM (RT). On 15 Feb., Palomarin Beach Trail near Bolinas, MRN, produced Short-tailed Shearwater and Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel (PG).



Tufted Puffin

For the second straight month, the subadult **Brown Booby** (*Sula leucogaster*), first found at Princeton Harbor, SM, on 2 Jan., (RT) was a star attraction. But the longevity record would have to go to "McCatty" the Cattle Egret, believed to be more than 20 years old, who annually winters at Lake Merritt (ALA), and was observed mul-

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

and Peregrine Falcons. Black Rail, a "Holy Grail" bird for many listers, was heard repeatedly making its "kee-ki-do" call on 21 Feb. at the Huichica Unit of the Napa-Sonoma Marshes Wildlife Area, NAP (RC). Clapper Rail, Virginia Rail, and Common Moorhen were also reported during the period.

On 24 Feb., a Spotted Sandpiper visited the Cheese Factory in MRN (actually, the pond next door) (GF). Fifteen Ruddy Turnstones were seen in Foster City, SM, on 15 Feb. (FT) and another was spotted at Redwood Shores on the 22<sup>nd</sup> (RF). David Suddjian has documented dramatic recent declines for this species in the Santa Cruz area and CBC data for California show a 50% decline in the last 10 years. Small numbers of Red Knots were noted in SM and SON (FT; RL).

A **Curlew Sandpiper** (*Calidris ferruginea*) was hanging out with Dunlins and Western Sandpipers at the Napa-Sonoma Marsh (SOL) on 14 Feb.—a spectacular find but, unfortunately, only accessible by boat (NA). A female Ruff (a.k.a. Reeve) was found on 1 Feb. N of the Alviso Marina, SCL (AE) and was seen again on the 3rd (RP).

Three Pomarine Jaeger sightings were reported in February, all from SM (MH; RT). On 20 Feb., an immature Glaucous Gull was at Stow Lake, SF (KH). A 21 Feb. sea watch from Moss Beach, SM, produced 2 Black-legged Kittiwakes (RT).

In the Alcid department, 6 Marbled Murrelets were reported from 3 locations in SON and MRN in Feb. (MP & DHf; PG; RL). Ancient Murrelets were spotted offshore at Duncan's Landing, SON, on 4 Feb. (MP, DHf) and from Pigeon Point, SM, on the 16<sup>th</sup> (SM). An observer found a Tufted Puffin while hiking the Palomarin Beach Trail (MRN) on 15 Feb. (PG).

## Doves to Thrashers

Two Northern Pygmy-Owls were located in Lower Willow Cr. Canyon, SON, on 4 Feb; (MP, DHf) and a third became a

### Wood Warbler Sightings

#### Hermit Warbler

5 Feb.	Presidio, SF	Josiah Clark
7 Feb.	Sutro Hts Park, SF	Norm and Eileen Ong

#### Palm Warbler

9 Feb.	Pilarcitos Cr., SM	RT
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#### Canada Warbler

Dec. 18– Feb. 11	SF Zoo, SF	mob
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**Abbreviations for Observers:** DA, David Armstrong; NA, Nicole Atherm; MB, Murray Berner; HC, Hugh Cotter; RC, Roy Carlson; ADM, Al DeMartini; JD, Jim Danzenbaker; JDn, Jane Dang; AE, Al Eisner; BF, Brian Fitch; DF, David Feliz; GF, George Finger; HF, Harry Fuller; RF, Rich Ferrick; PG, Peter Gernol; AH, Alan Hopkins; DnH, Denise Hamilton; DvH, David Hamilton; DHf, David Hoffman; GHa, Garth Harwood; JH, Jane Hodges; KH, Kristi Hein; MH, Merry Haveman; SH, Steve Huckabone; WH, Wen Hsu; KK, Keith Kwan; SK, Scott Kaiser; CL, Cindy Lieurance; JL, John Luther; LL, Les Lieurance; RL, Rick Lebaudour; RLn, Robin Leong; DM, Dan Murphy; DMr, Dawn Morrison; JM, Joe Moran; RM, Roger Muskai; RMI, Ron Melzer; TM, Tom McCuller; MP, Mike Parrneter; RP, Robert Power; BRc, Bob Richmond; JR, Jean Richmond; MR, Mark Rauzon; DSn, Dan Singer; ES, Emilie Strauss; KS, Kathryn Spence; LS, Lang Stevenson; MS, Maury Stern; RS, Rich Stallcup; FT, Francis Toldi; RT, Ronald S. Thorn; RTh, Ron Thompson; MU, Myra Ulvang; AW, Anna Wilcox; DWi, Denise Wight; NW, Nat Weber

Semicolons separate original observer(s) from subsequent observer(s). Abbreviation "mob" = many observers; "oob" = other observers. Information is compiled from BirdBox transcripts and regional listservs; the author apologizes for any errors or omissions.

**Abbreviations for Counties and Others:** ALA, Alameda; CBC, Christmas Bird Count; CC, Contra Costa; Cr., Creek; GGP, Golden Gate Park; GLN, Glenn; L., Lake; LAS, Lassen; MEN, Mendocino; MER, Merced; MOD, Modoc; MRN, Marin; MTY, Monterey; PLA, Placer; PRNS, Pt. Reyes National Seashore; Res., Reservoir; SB, State Beach; SCL, Santa Clara; SCZ, Santa Cruz; SF, San Francisco; SIS, Siskiyou; SJO, San Joaquin; SM, San Mateo; SOL, Solano; SON, Sonoma; SR, State Reserve.

new backyard bird in Pescadero, SM, on the 20<sup>th</sup> (GHa). Birders visited the Burrowing Owl on Grizzly Island Road (SOL) on 15 Feb. (RLn; mob) and the same day, 3 turned up at Cesar Chavez Park in Berkeley, ALA (JDn; WH). The third Burrowing Owl report came on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, along Hwy 505, SOL (RL). Single Short-eared Owls were located in SM (RT), NAP (RC), and ALA (SH), but a whopping total of 11 such marsh hunters were discovered on 5 Feb. on Main Prairie Road, SOL (RM).

On 8 Feb., birders refound a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker along Butano Cr. (SM), first found on the Ano Nuevo CBC (MH; RT & AE). Another CBC find, the Colma (SM) Tropical Kingbird, stayed with us throughout the month of Feb. (mob). On 18 Feb., a Townsend's Solitaire was a one-day wonder in Moraga, CC (NW).


The final bird of note for this section, a Sage Thrasher, turned up at the UC Davis Raptor Center (SOL) on 10 Feb. (RMI) and continued at least through the 22<sup>nd</sup> (mob). According to Robin Leong, subregional editor for *Field Notes*, the first known County record was just 9 years ago at Grizzly Island (DF).

## Wood Warblers to Finches

February was a slow month for warblers, with the most interesting species being the continued Canada Warbler at the San Francisco Zoo, seen on the 9<sup>th</sup> (DSn) and the 11<sup>th</sup> (ADM). The \$10 zoo entrance fee gave birders access to lots of other rarities as well, but all in cages.

The best sparrow of the month was a Grasshopper Sparrow, seen on the fence along Novato Road, MRN on 5 Feb. (RS). This is only the second MRN winter record. Swamp Sparrows were reported on 8 Feb. from SOL (MB) and 25 Feb. from SM (RT).

Rivaling the aforementioned Northern Pygmy-Owl in the "best yard bird" category, an Indigo Bunting showed up at a Lafayette (CC) seed feeder on 28 Feb. (MS). Unrivaled in the "best parking lot bird" category, the Sunnyvale (SCL) Rusty Blackbird continued at a local shopping center at least through the 19<sup>th</sup> (mob).

Rounding out this month's report, 5 Red Crossbills showed up in Pescadero (SM) on 20 Feb. (GHa) and, the next day, another contender for "best yard bird," this time an Evening Grosbeak, visited a residence in Saratoga, SCL (JH). 

## Volunteer Opportunity

### East Bay Regional Park District Representative

Russ Wilson, who has represented Golden Gate Audubon at East Bay Regional Park District meetings for the past 20 years, has retired. His advocacy on behalf of open space and wildlife habitat in the parks has been invaluable to us. It is extremely important that someone pick up his work.

The main involvement with EBRPD is attending their Board of Directors meetings. These meetings are open to the public, and are held on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday afternoons each month, at the Park District Headquarters near the Oakland Zoo. Issues of concern to GGAS range from fuel breaks, balancing habitat preservation with recreation facilities, feral cats, off-leash dogs and cattle over-grazing to mountain bikes on single-track trails. Russ spoke up for GGAS at these meetings and reported to the Conservation Committee on Park District issues the second Monday evening of each month in the GGAS offices.

With 59 parks covering 91,000 acres in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, it's imperative to have GGAS represented at the meetings to show our concern about maintaining open space and wildlife habitat. Please call or e-mail Jacqui Smalley, 510.655.0998, [smalleyj@pacbell.net](mailto:smalleyj@pacbell.net) to volunteer for this position. 🐦

*continued from page 1*

and he agreed.

The Navy and Fish and Wildlife Service still have to resolve the contaminant issues on the Refuge lands and this could prove to be a deal breaker. But at least both sides are now talking at high levels and both want the transfer to take place. It's as good a situation as we have had since 1994. With a little luck, a lot of letters and continued advocacy, we have every reason to be hopeful.

It would be wonderful if you would all write to Judge Manson and thank him for his support of the Alameda National Wildlife Refuge. His address is:

Judge Craig Manson,  
Assistant Secretary of the Interior  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
849 C St., N.W., Room 3160  
Washington, D.C. 20240. 🐦

### WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

As a member of National Audubon Society, you are automatically enrolled in the local chapter, Golden Gate Audubon Society. Chapter benefits include receipt of *The Gull*, access to field trips and programs, and the opportunity to volunteer. Call the office if you have any questions.

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